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S E C R E T BAGHDAD 000822

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2026
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SHIA HARDLINER HINTS THE SHIA COALITION MAY YET
DUMP JAFARI

Classified By: PolCouns Robert Ford, reason 1.4 (d)

1.(C) On March 14, Shia Islamist hardliner Sayyid Jalal ad Din al-Sagheer, a top figure in the Shia Coalition's SCIRI party, told PolCouns that there are three things the Shia Coalition needs to do for government formation: bring the Kurds back to the Shia side of the negotiating table; allow Tawaffuq to participate - even though the Shia do not trust the Sunni Arab bloc; and give PM Ibrahim Jafari a few days, and no more, to fix his problems. He recognized that the situation in Iraq is urgent and needs a unity government. Al-Sagheer hinted that the Shia Coalition could select another PM nominee if Jafari cannot find broader support from the Kurds and Tawaffuq. Smiling quietly, al-Sagheer observed that the Najaf clerics do not support Jafari and would not object to moves to remove him.

12. (S) Al-Sagheer added that before the Shia Coalition PM nomination vote Jafari was weak and had no cards to play. He blamed the Sadr movement's unflinching support for Jafari, the Kurdish public rejection of Jafari and American criticism of the Interior Ministry that had rallied Shia support behind Jafari. Al-Sagheer reported that Jafari is attempting to pull Saleh Mutlak and Adnan Dulaimi away from Tawaffuq. Al-Sagheer said he was not sure if Jafari would prevail in the end. However, he was adamant that the violence (that he thought targets mainly Shia) must stop with the intervention of a strong government hand. He warned PolCouns that the U.S. should be careful so that Iran's nuclear problem with the West is not played out in Iraq. (Comment: Al-Sagheer, who has connections with Iran, seemed to be speaking more from broad anxiety than from any certain knowledge about a particular Iranian intent. End Comment.)
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